



(U//FOUO) Working at GCHQ and NSA: Like Apples and Grapes?

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A British integree settles into the working life in the U.S. (U//FOUO)

(U//FOUO) A [previous SID today article](#) described some of the roles & responsibilities of the UK Liaison Team, which is situated on Floor 7 of OPS2B. As one of a number (about 45) of GCHQ integrees at NSA, I thought it would be useful to outline what life is like being incorporated into the American workplace!

(U//FOUO) I work within the Office of International Security Issues (ISI - S2C) and have done so since last August when I arrived from GCHQ. Throughout the subsequent months, I have been struck by both the similarities & differences between working in SID & its GCHQ equivalent, Operations.

(U//FOUO) Similarities include:

- The focus on Counterterrorism & Support to Military Operations (including the increasing number of personnel being deployed to the "front-line")
- Transformation
- The attention being paid to better leadership
- The importance of car-parking spaces!
- The endless abbreviations, acronyms & code words.

(U//FOUO) Differences include:

- The sheer size of SID (& NSA), when compared to Operations (& GCHQ).
- The available resources (both in terms of staff & finances)
- The NSA cubicles, as compared to GCHQ's open-plan infrastructure. (GCHQ's new building in Cheltenham (pictured below) has a completely open-plan office design. No offices, no cubicles, no privacy! However, it has enhanced cross-team collaboration and improved team-working, although as with all changes of this nature, there are drawbacks, too, such as increased noise pollution & the frequency of disturbances, etc.)
- And of course, our language! (No, I haven't got an accent, everyone else has)

(C) My day-to-day work includes issues central to the target set of ISI but also the skill enhancement and development of staff, which is both a challenging and rewarding responsibility. Naturally, working at NSA and being fully integrated into an NSA office is very different from GCHQ and it does take some time to adapt to the different culture. Once the settling-in period is over, it's satisfying to note that our goals are very similar and I no longer consider myself as 'the Integree', but simply part of the team!

(U) Working at NSA, and indeed living in the USA, is a truly broadening experience. There is so much scope for personal development here and being exposed to such a diverse workforce is a real benefit that will stay with me for the rest of my career. Outside the gates of NSA, there is a whole new world for my family and me to explore; the opportunities are indeed, endless.

(U) Am I missing old Blighty? Not at all -- especially not the weather, fuel prices (you think

yours are high?!?) and the traffic, although a crate of baked beans* wouldn't go amiss ;)

So for now, "chocks-away, toodle-pip old bean"

God Save The Queen (and Camilla of course).



**(U) It seems that the baked beans sold in the UK are different from the American variety! -- The editor.*

(U//FOUO) Do any other integrees out there have observations? Let us know, via the feedback function!

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